



# old school hack

THE BASIC GAME



*by Kirin Robinson  
based on a game by Eric Provost*

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## A GAME OF FANTASY AWESOMENESS

January 2011  
Basic Game v1.1  
by Kirin Robinson  
with thanks to Scott Moore and others  
based on a game by Eric Provost  
[www.oldschoolhack.net](http://www.oldschoolhack.net)

### acknowledgments

The majority of this game is based on Eric Provost's excellent **Red Box Hack**, in his attempts to capture what he considered the best parts of the original Red Box version of Gygax's game and take it in a new direction. Without Eric's innovative work, and the generosity with which he released his game for anyone to tweak and play with, this "hack" of his hack would not exist.

Encouragement and support was also given to me by the fine folks at both the Story-Games forum and the Circvs Maximvs

forum. Thanks of course to my own excellent group of gaming buddies and to my older brother without whom I never would have gotten into tabletop gaming in the first place.

Lastly I hardly need mention the wonderful legacy of table-top roleplaying gaming that Gary Gygax and his friends and fellow authors have left us with, without whom none of these adventures would be possible.

Rest in peace, dear friend.

### license

Old School Hack is a free, non-commercial roleplaying game, which you should feel free to expand upon by writing your own content or supplements.



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# Introduction & Setup

The pedigree of this particular roleplaying game should be pretty obvious, as it's certainly not lonely in the particular niche it's hoping to fill. Nonetheless, I think it's safe to call Old School Hack a *re-imagining* of the original fantasy roleplaying game by Gary Gygax; aimed squarely at capturing the spirit and the feel of his game but with a new ruleset that takes advantage of more recent gaming ideas.

I've worked hard to make this game as approachable and as intuitive and easy-to-understand as possible (though basic knowledge of roleplaying principles are assumed), and I'm pleased to say that it's withstood the rigors of a considerable amount of playtesting to find the right balance of mechanics, flavor, and narrative

abstraction that encourages entertaining and adventurous roleplaying.

You should recruit somewhere between two to seven other people to play it with, with one of you designated as a DM (which stands for, well... you know); probably being you, since you're the sort that actually takes the time to read a game introduction.

Old School Hack should be played adaptively and off-the-cuff, with an eye to letting each character shine in his or her particular way, and with a love for the wonderfully fantastic locales, environments, and dungeons inspired by the decades of creative fantasy gaming adventures that have been released and all the great adventures that originate from our imaginations.

## how far can we go with this?

This document represents hopefully the first in a tiered collection of games: this being the **Basic Game**, representing the careers and character options a party would have for the first four levels of play. Once you and your group have accomplished that, the next tier of the game (tentatively called the **Heroic Game**) will take you into the fifth through eighth levels of your character, and the one after that (tentatively called the **Mythic Game**) will take you into the ninth through twelfth levels.

Each graduation into the next game will give your character more hit points and access to a new assortment of talents and class options, while also giving the DM more and more tools for broadening the world and the plots that he or she has in play.



## stuff you'll need

### A BUNCH OF DICE

The game uses mostly **d10s** and **d12s**. Some of the d10s should be cooler-looking than the others (for face dice).

### A POINT-FILLED BOWL

You can use poker chips, beans, coins, whatever's handy. The bowl should be reachable by everyone.

### VARIOUS PRINT-OUTS

At least one of each of the seven **Class Sheets**, **Character Sheets** for everyone, and maybe an extra **Weapons & Arenas Sheet** and an **Armor & Healing Sheet**.

### CHARACTER & BAD GUY TOKENS

Something to represent the good guys and the bad guys, there's a sheet in the supplementals section. A one-inch hole punch from a craft store plus some washers work great.

### SETS OF COMBAT CARDS

One set per player & DM. Note that each set comes with a handy card displayer which also includes some useful character info.

– and/or –

### COMBAT HEX TRACKER

You'll need an extra set of the **Character & Bad Guy Tokens** for placing on the tracker each round.

## the setting

The game starts out in a magic-infused medieval fantasy world on the edge of civilization, this “edge” perhaps being geographical (occurring in the borderlands or a wild frontier) or historical (either chronologically taking place after some sort of cataclysm or during the decline of a great empire); it is a world where fantastic dangers exist in a multitude of old ruins and underground lairs.

There is always some sort of evil plot afoot, a darkness that is unfolding in sinister

places, and it is always up to the players to uncover it and defeat it; whether in the pursuit of justice, glory, or their own lusts for power.

If over multiple sessions of play the game progresses beyond the initial adventuring implied by these rules, more and more of the world may get explored, and the characters could end up traveling through other worlds or even weirder places as they adventure for fame and glory.

# Creating your Character

## HOW TO MAKE AN OLD-SCHOOL HACK (and SLASHER)

**1<sup>st</sup>** Every player picks one of the seven **Class Sheets**. Once you've picked a class, that class belongs to you, and no one else can play it, so don't be a dick about it. Look over your class sheet and read as much of it as you can, paying special attention to your class **Inherent** and **Limitation**\* as well as what Talents the class offers.

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Grab a **Character Sheet** and begin rolling your Attributes. Roll **2d10** and consult the Attribute Bonus Chart (there's one on your Class Sheet as well), and then assign the bonus (-2 to +5) to one of the six attributes you feel is appropriate. Do this five more times. Don't worry too much about having the right "Key Stat" for your class, the system doesn't care too much about such things.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Fill in the **Class & Concept** on your sheet with something cool, like the named level of your chosen class, but add a little extra flair: "*Eagerly Curious Prestidigitator*" or "*Skulking Little Bastard*" are some examples. If you can come up with something you like, name your character at this point.

**4<sup>th</sup>** Pick a single **Talent** from your class sheet, whatever you think sounds like the most fun. Can't pick just one? Don't worry, you get to pick a new one every level.

Oh yeah, this is kind of important - Talents come in three flavors:

### constant talents

These talents are either always on or can be used as many times as you want.

### arena talents

Once *successfully* used in combat, these talents can't be used again until you move to a new Arena.

However, spending an **Awesome Point** lets you use a spent Arena Talent *again* even though you're still in the same Arena.

### rested talents

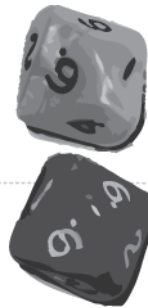
These talents can only be used *once a day*, or at least until you get a meal and some decent rest.

If you spend *two Awesome Points* and roleplay a little explanation how, you can usually recharge a spent Rested Talent outside of combat unless your DM has a good reason why you can't.

\* **Limitations**, by the way, are *purely optional* suggestions on how to roleplay the class you've chosen. Feel free to ignore, change, or put your own spin on them.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5



## some adventuring goals

CHOOSE, ROLL or COME UP WITH YOUR OWN

- 1 A cleric has divined the whereabouts of a rare cure for an ailing family member.
- 2 You're after the bandit that killed one of your parents.
- 3 An ancestor forged a mighty weapon but it has since been stolen and lost.
- 4 You owe a dangerous underworld lord 5 thousand gold pieces.
- 5 You will collect something from every foe you've defeated.
- 6 You're obsessed with finding a strange and fantastical place that most people assume is just myth.
- 7 A dangerous person in power must be stopped, and you're the one to do it.
- 8 An old lover or friend has gone missing or is involved in something dangerous.
- 9 An assassin is after you and you don't know why.
- 10 You must prove and test yourself in danger to join the guild/circle/school you desperately want to be a part of.
- 11 You were mentioned in a portentous prophecy.
- 12 One of these days you're going to spit in a dragon's eye!

You may have also noticed that some Talents (like most spells) are also marked as **Focused Talents** - this means that using them in a combat round requires you to be vulnerable for a short while before they take effect.



**5<sup>th</sup>**

Take a look at the **Weapon & Arenas** sheet and pick what category your starting weapon is - your weapon can be anything from a *Shortsword* to a *Magic Wand* to a *Keg of Ale* as long as you pick a weapon category that makes sense for it. Write it down and note what arena it has a bonus in. Note the **Encumbrance Rules** if you want a *Heavy* or *Very Heavy* weapon!

**6<sup>th</sup>**

Keeping the (simple) Encumbrance Rules in mind, pick a type of armor from the **Armor & Healing** sheet. Magic Users can wear armor but they may want those free Awesome Points that you get after fighting armorless in order to recharge their Talent Spells.

**7<sup>th</sup>**

Note the starting equipment for your class (on your class sheet), and roll your starting coin and write it in your **Coin Purse** box. If you're playing the Goblin, check the other players' class sheet equipment lists and claim stuff like they have.

**8<sup>th</sup>**

Come up with an **Adventuring Goal** and write it on your class sheet! It should be something fun that fits your concept and is (relatively) achievable with a little bit of hard work and luck.

# The Fighter

The Fighter is a bad-ass warrior who's good at surviving when the chips are down.

## inherent: Steely-eyed

You're good at hitting things. Every roll you make to hit something gets a +1 added to it.

## limitation: Upkeep

Staying in combat trim requires constant focus, practice and precision, as well as lots of weapon sharpening and armor polishing.

A lot of your free time is mostly spent either practicing or working on your equipment.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

## starting equipment

A bedroll, a leather flask of wine, a sack filled with dried rations and hardcheese, some flint & tinder, three torches, a whetstone, a sewing kit, some candles and a crowbar.

STARTING COIN: 1d10 gp, 1d12 sp

## available talents

(pick one at first level)

### ARMOR OF SCARS *constant ability*

Getting beat up as often as you do has its advantages. You're tougher than most, and can take more punishment because of it. You start off with seven hit points instead of the usual five. Plus you've usually got some old war stories and a don't-mess-with-me countenance that gives you a +2 on any *Charm* check when trying to talk someone out of violence.

### WEAPON OF CHOICE *constant ability*

You've become adeptly familiar with a specific weapon of your choice, and you use it as a natural extension of your body. As long as you are wielding it, all your attack dice are **Face Dice**. If for whatever reason you take up a new weapon, a week of training will switch your **Weapon of Choice** to that one.

### CHARGER *double action, usable once per arena*

You're an expert at rushing in to attack. Once for every arena, you can make both a **Move** action *and* an **Attack** action in the same round, with a +2 bonus to the attack.

### HEFT *constant ability*

You've got a little bit more oomph than everyone else. You can carry one more **Heavy** weapon or armor than your *Brawn* bonus would allow, and when you choose to wear no armor at all, your sexy build gives you a +2 bonus on any *Charm* check you make against someone that might be attracted to you.

### EXPLOIT WEAKNESS *focused attack, usable after rested*

Practice in fighting means you have a trained eye for an Achilles' Heel. Every couple of fights you can carefully observe that a monster or an opponent has a weakness, and if you are able to successfully **Focus** on it, subsequent attacks you make against it get a +2 bonus to hit and do an extra point of damage.

## adventuring goals



## experience

Awesome Points Used

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1st ☒

Man-at-arms

2nd ☐

Mercenary

3rd ☐

Warrior

4th ☐

Hero



## game notes



focused

constant

per arena

rested



# The Magic User

The Magic User has studied the inner workings of the magical forces that permeate the world, and has some control over them.

## inherent: Veil Touch

You see the mystical forces at work, where other users of magic have left their mark, or their spells are in effect or were within the last day or two. Not only that, you can leave your magical mark on any wall or object, visible only to people whom you feel would need to see it.

## limit: Power Hungry

You wouldn't have the knowledge you have if you weren't ruthlessly passionate about being able to control stuff. Someday time and space will change at your whim, and who knows how that will affect you.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

## starting equipment


A cloak warm enough to sleep in, a waterskin, some dried food, a small knife, a few pouches of exotic and weird components, a scrollcase filled with parchments and pens, a small bound book for notes, and some flashpowder for impressing people.

STARTING COIN: 2d10 gp


## available talents

(pick one at first level)


**BOOK OF POWER** *magic item, usable anytime out of combat*

 You have acquired a magical tome, perhaps found, stolen, or given to you, in which hold a great many secrets, spells and lore. By spending a couple of minutes looking things up, you always know a single important fact about any given subject, either given to you by the DM or made up on the spot (per DM approval).


**SLEEP SPELL** *focused spell, usable once after rested*

 Your character can make his or her voice take on a particularly somber and restful tone. Doing so, you can make two opponents or any number of **Minions** in your arena that can hear you fall asleep by making a successful *Charm* test vs. their *Commitment(s)*. They'll sleep through any noise, but a good shake or swift kick is all it takes to wake them.


**PUPPET STRINGS** *focused spell, usable only once per arena*

 By waving your staff, implement, or just your fingers about, you can make one to three small and light inanimate things begin to float about nearby. They will even dance if you hum a tune. If you successfully cast the spell in combat, it increases your armor by one category as if you had a reach weapon until you take damage from a successful attack.

**CONTROL PORTAL** *focused spell, usable anytime*

 You have the ability to speak to doors of any type. You can make any door unlock itself with a successful *Charm* check, tell you what has gone through it recently, or you can tell a single door to bar itself against any entry, your *Commitment* against the *Brawn* test of anything trying to open it. You can only affect one door at a time in this way.

**MAGIC MISSILE** *focused spell, usable once after rested*

 This spell shoots out a magical bolt that automatically hits anything in your arena or an adjacent one, doing 2 points of damage, no need to roll. By taking a hit point of damage yourself, you can increase the damage to 3 points.

## adventuring goals



## experience

Awesome Points Used

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1<sup>st</sup> ☒

Prestidigitator

2<sup>nd</sup> ☐

Conjurer

3<sup>rd</sup> ☐

Theurgist

4<sup>th</sup> ☐

Magician



## game notes

focused 

constant 

per arena 

rested 



# The Cleric

A holy warrior or fighting monk, the Cleric's faith inspires righteous acts, salves the wounded, and rallies companions.

## inherent: Divine Favor

You are under the wing of one or more deities, and have their protection. As long as you visibly wear representation of your faith, your **Armor Class** increases by a single point.

## limitation: Humility

You are bound by the strictures of your faith, whatever they may be. It is important to you to present the ideals of that faith to others.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

## starting equipment

A bedroll, some holy vestments, a symbol of your faith, bread, cheese and a small bottle of wine, an ornate box filled with incenses or other ritual items, soap and some bandages.

STARTING COIN: 1d10 gp, 1d12 sp

## available talents

(pick one at first level)

**PRAYERS OF THE HURT** *focused spell, usable only once after rested*



This spell invokes your deity to close wounds and restore health and energy. By laying your hands on someone who is down to 2 hit points or less, which could be yourself, you bring them back up to 1 hit point less than full in a quick ritual that lights up the area around you.



**AURAS OF EVIL** *constant ability*



Above and beyond simple malevolence in someone's heart, some places, things and people in the world reek of true evil, whether they are touched by fell gods or by demonic taint. You can sense this kind of greater evil by merely taking a moment and focusing, and by taking the time to make an actual *Awareness* check you may be able to discern the source or nature of the evil if it is disguised.

**BLESS WEAPON** *focused spell, usable once per arena*



You can clutch a weapon and imbue it with divine essence at the cost of a little bit of your health. When touching a weapon, you must declare a purpose for its blessing, whether for something quick or for a long-term goal. Any weapon thus touched does an extra point of damage each time a successful attack is made with it, but your character is permanently down a hit point. Once the purpose is reached or is declared unobtainable, the weapon loses its property and you get your hit point back.



**TURN UNDEAD** *focused spell, usable only once after rested*



By invoking your god and displaying your holy symbol, you acquire a holy or unholy aura around you and those nearby. Any non-**Minion** undead must test their *Daring* against your *Commitment* (at a +2) to be able to attack anyone in your party, while **Minions** can't attack you at all. If you remain undamaged for three rounds of concentrating, you can disperse the aura outward, either destroying (holy) or controlling (unholy) any one undead or group of minions in the same arena.



**WORK THE ROOM** *non-combat talent, usable only once after rested*



By making an impassioned speech that lasts at least five minutes, you can inspire people around you (giving them +2 to their daring or +1 to their attacks) for the next hour, or convince people of your point of view (+5 to your next *Charm* check if needed).

## adventuring goals



## experience

Awesome Points Used

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1st ☒

Acolyte

2nd ☐

Faith Keeper

3rd ☐

Adept

4th ☐

Priest



## game notes

focused   
constant   
per arena   
rested



# The Thief

Nimble and full of trickery, the thief is someone who can slip into difficult places and uncover secrets that no one is supposed to know.

## inherent: Opportunity Knocks

Every now and then fortune smiles on you and pulls your fat out of the fire. Once per game session you get an automatic success on any *Cunning* or *Daring* test, or on a single attack roll.

## limitation: Greedy

Your covetousness and dislike of sharing are constantly at odds with the obvious convenience of having friends and traveling companions.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

## starting equipment

A couple of empty sacks, a leather-bound toolkit with some lockpicks, A hooded lantern with an extra flask of oil, about 25 feet of rope with a hook, a blanket, and a small glass lens.

STARTING COIN: 2d12 sp

## available talents

(pick one at first level)

**BUSY HANDS** *focused action, usable anytime*



A successful *Cunning* check against a same-arena opponent's *Awareness* allows you to remove and acquire any visible object that they are not actively holding, no matter what the situation is. During combat this is usually noticed, regardless of success.



**BACKSTAB** *special attack, usable once per arena*



By attacking an opponent that happens to be attacking somebody else this round, you get a +2 to hit them and do an extra two points of damage.



**DISTRACTION** *focused action, usable once after rested*



By making a *Daring* check (with a +2) instead of the usual *Brawn* check you would use to **Throw** an opponent, you can force an opponent to move to another arena that they have access to. But get this, you don't even need to be in the same arena! You do need to describe how you did it, however (Also handy outside of combat for luring enemies into places you want them to be).



**ENDLESS DAGGERS** *constant item*

You like to always have a cache of sharp things hidden around your person, which you can use above and beyond your main weapon as a secondary **Ranged** or **Light** weapon. Any attempts to disarm you will always result in your having at least one small blade somewhere that was missed. These daggers do not count towards your total number of weapon types.



**QUICK REACTION** *immediate reaction, usable anytime*



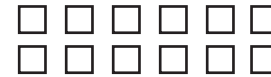
Whenever you are surprised by something or someone, including traps, you get to add a +2 on the next die roll you make as long as it happens directly afterwards.

## adventuring goals



## experience

Awesome Points Used



Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1st ☒

Rogue

2nd ☐

Footpad

3rd ☐

Scout

4th ☐

Shadow



## game notes

reactive

focused

constant

per arena

rested





# The Elf

A creature of the mysterious woods, the Elf has a natural grace that comes from being one of the first-created. Elves blend martial skills with a natural affinity for certain magic.

## inherent: Pointed Awareness

You've got a sense of the world around you that seems almost unnatural. You get to increase your starting *Awareness* bonus by one, and any initiative roll you make is improved by two.

## limitation: Restless

For whatever reason, you're driven in a way that other elves are not, and you've left your people to go adventuring. You know this sets you apart from your kind and other elves think of you as strange.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

## starting equipment

A naturally camouflaging cloak, some elven waybread, a waterskin, a small sack of nuts and berries, an exquisite cutting knife, a rune or other heirloom, and a lodestone.

STARTING COIN: 1d10 sp

## available talents

(pick one at first level)

**PERFECT ACCURACY** *delayed attack, usable once per arena*



Any delayed attack you attempt to make with a Ranged weapon gets a +2 added to the attack roll if it's not interrupted by the **Attack Turn**. Outside of combat, as long as you aim for at least a minute at something that you can see, you will always hit it. You can initiate combat this way.

**ANIMAL FRIEND** *constant ability*



You can speak with any natural animal of the forest (and a few outside the forest), though they may not want to be friends with you. If you do manage to make friends with an animal, it will travel with you and help you out for at least a day, maybe more.

**FOREST STEP** *constant ability*



You get a +2 bonus to any roll that a DM requires you to make in order to travel from one arena to another. You also happen to be untrackable and never get lost in the woods.

**FEY SPIRIT** *focused spell, usable only once after rested*



You can summon a floating light source that follows your commands, including being able to shine as brightly as a torch or as dim as a candle. Alternately, you can bind the spirit to a single item to light up the same way, specifying what conditions make it glow (Orcs being near is a common one).

**NIMBLE ATTACK** *focused attack, usable once per arena*



By making a **Focused** attack, you can attack an opponent in an unexpected way (usually by describing something cool with the environment), doing an extra point of damage as well as some extra sort of **Cool Effect** if you successfully hit (knocking them down, making them feel foolish, carving your initial, etc).



## adventuring goals



## experience

Awesome Points Used

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1<sup>st</sup> ☒

Wanderer

2<sup>nd</sup> ☐

Whisperer

3<sup>rd</sup> ☐

Quickbow

4<sup>th</sup> ☐

Warden



## game notes



focused

constant

per arena

rested

# The Dwarf

The Dwarf is a bearded ball of boastful fury hailing from underground realms. They are natural craftsmen and warriors, and tend to be fiercely loyal.

## inherent: Fierce & Proud

You're a dwarf, so you cannot be **Pushed** out of your arena (alas, you can still be **Thrown**). Your starting *Commitment* bonus is increased by one.

## limitation: Proud & Fierce

You have a hard time forgiving any slight you think is made against you.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

## starting equipment

A small hammer and pick, a bag of Dwarven hardbread, an aleskin, an extra mug, armor and weapon polish, a whetstone, and a portable set of weighing scales.

STARTING COIN: 1d12 gp, 1d12 sp

## available talents

(pick one at first level)

### BRAIDS OF THE CLAN *constant ability*

- Any regular dwarf that you meet, no matter where you are, you happen to know them or know someone that does, and easily have something to talk about. These dwarves are usually eager to provide you with help or information, so you've always got someone to rely on.

### SHIELD BASH *special weapon attack, usable once-per-arena*

- If you are wielding either a Shield or a Hammer, you can attempt a special attack that also *stuns* an opponent, preventing them from using the **Attack** action this round or the next.

### IMPRESSIVE PARTYING *constant ability*

- Frankly, when it comes to celebrating and carousing, no-one else holds up. You automatically beat any non-dwarf at any sort of drinking or cursing contest. Matches against other **Impressive Partiers** involve a standard contested *Commitment* or *Daring* roll.

### MAKE AN OATH *focused attack, usable only once after rested* (oaths are serious business, after all)

- By spending a few moments making some sort of solemn vow ("You shall not pass", "Only you shall feel my axe", etc.), you get a +1 bonus to all attack rolls as long as the vow's conditions are in effect. Once the vow is broken somehow, all your combat rolls suffer a -1 until the combat ends.

### UNDER THE MOUNTAIN *constant ability*

- You can never get lost when you're underground and you're always able to sniff which direction leads up to the surface. Furthermore, any *Awareness* check you make that relates to searching stonework or deducing qualities thereof is given a +4.

## adventuring goals

### experience

Awesome Points Used

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1<sup>st</sup> ☒ Shortbeard




2<sup>nd</sup> ☐ Stout

3<sup>rd</sup> ☐ Defender

4<sup>th</sup> ☐ Clansman

### game notes



focused   
constant   
per-arena   
rested 

# The Goblin

Smaller of stature than all the other classes, the Goblin is a curious and sometimes dangerous creature that has been touched by malevolence. Some Goblins are evil, others merely mischievous.

## inherent: Dungeon-wise

You are able to see quite well in the dark, You are only about two-and-a-half to three feet tall, so it's very easy to get into places that your fellow adventurers cannot. You can speak to and understand most monsters. Your starting *Cunning* bonus is increased by one.

## limitation: Hated

Trying to fit in a civilized environment can be difficult. Not that there aren't goblins that manage to fit into regular human or demi-human society, but it doesn't change the constant distrust that people seem to have of you.

### ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

## starting equipment

A collection of dead and dried rats tied to a stick, a single beautiful gemstone, **1d4+1** miscellaneous adventuring gear culled from the other class's equipment lists.

**STARTING COIN:** 1 sp



## adventuring goals

## available talents

(pick one at first level)

### CAST-IRON STOMACH *constant ability*



You can eat pretty much anything. You can retrieve it later if you're willing to get your hands dirty. You always have a **Light** weapon, even if you've been disarmed, thanks to those sharp teeth of yours.

### SHADOWKIN *focused action, can do anytime*



As long as there's a dark place nearby, you can quickly disappear, and anybody attempting to attack you must succeed at an *Awareness* check vs. your *Cunning* first. Once successfully in the shadows, you receive a +2 on your next attack, after which you are once again clearly visible.



### SLIPPERY *immediate reaction, usable once per arena*



The first attack on you during a round you've spent **Moving** automatically misses; but you cannot choose the **Move** action on the following round.



### UNDERFOOT *immediate reaction, usable only once after a rest*



You can give up an existing action to automatically succeed at **Impeding** someone, and doing so trips them up enough that their next roll is made at a -1 (don't forget to remind the DM).



### HEART OF GOLD *non-combat talent, usable only once after a rest*



Every now and then, your normally sinister nature is completely subverted by random acts of adorability. By breaking into a huge innocent smile, no non-player-character will possibly be able to believe that you've done something bad. Your fellow party members may know better, however.



## experience

Awesome Points Used

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1st ☒

Skulker

2nd ☐

Sharpeye

3rd ☐

Rutterkin

4th ☐

Trickster



## game notes

- reactive
- focused
- constant
- per arena
- rested



character name

Played by: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTRIBUTES



**brawn**

sheer size, number of heavy things you can carry, physical intimidation factor



**cunning**

trickery, sneakiness, doing stuff that others are trying to prevent



**daring**

courage, facing your fears and attempting dangerous stuff without hesitation



**commitment**

devotion and intensity, catch-all saving throw, shrugging off magic and other wiles



**charm**

social aptitude, ability to inspire or encourage people to see things your way



**awareness**

alertness and perception, reflexes, "reading between the lines"

**Tricky or Sneaky Stuff Penalty**

- ☐ Heavy Armor (-2)  
☐ V. Heavy Armor (-5)

CONSTANT



**talents**

PER ARENA



AFTER A REST



**class & concept**

**Inherent Ability**



**current health**



Only use if Fighter Talent



Glancing blow



Been nicked, a few bruises



Wind knocked out, panting



Taken a nasty hit, bleeding



Messed up and hurting, making some dangerous mistakes



Roll a d10 and consult the rules to see if you are *Knocked Out* or *Bleeding Out*

**Primary Weapon**



**Other Weapons**

Every weapon after your first two counts as a **Heavy** item.

Favored Arena (+2 bonus)

**Equipment**

**SCARS**

**Armor**

Armor Type

Check boxes if using  
— Light Shield (1) or  
Heavy Shield (both)

☐ ☐

**armor class**

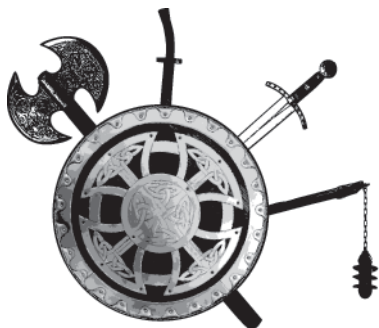
**coin purse**

**treasure & other Goodies**

**Character Sheet**

Basic Game





# Weapons & Arenas

## weapon type

## arena type

### ENCUMBRANCE

Some weapons, armor and other things (like treasure) that you'll find in the world are **Heavy**. Sometimes other things you'll find are **Very Heavy**.



### brawn

Your *Brawn* bonus also counts as the number of **Heavy** things that you can carry around comfortably and still do flashy and heroic stuff without a problem.

If you are carrying more **Heavy** things than your brawn allows, that means you're staggering around *encumbered* and you *automatically fail* every roll you make until you put them down.

**Very Heavy** things count as *two Heavy* things.

If your *Brawn* bonus is zero, you can only ever carry one **Heavy** thing (which counts as being *encumbered*). If your *Brawn* bonus is less than zero, you can't carry any **Heavy** items at all.

### your starting weapon

You start the game with a single type of weapon. This can be any weapon you can imagine, as long as you designate it under whichever category makes the most sense for it.

Eventually by adventuring, defeating foes, or simply taking time to shop you can acquire other weapons. However, any weapon type you carry beyond your first two counts as a **Heavy** item.

### LIGHT WEAPONS 1 point of damage

Smaller and quicker than other melee weapons. Using a light weapon allows you to roll **3d10** instead of **2d10**, ignoring the value shown on the lowest die.

+2 BONUS WHEN  
USED IN

**Examples:** *shortswords, rapiers, one-handed maces, daggers, truncheons, nunchucks, clawed gloves*

### REACH WEAPONS 1 point of damage

These are usually pole-arms or cool chain-based weapons. It's easier to keep your enemies at bay, so wielding one improves your **Armor Class** by one category.

+2 BONUS WHEN  
USED IN

**Examples:** *quarterstaff, poleaxe, spear, flail, net-and-trident, sword-and-chain*

### RANGED WEAPONS 1 point of damage

You attack earlier in Combat order, and can attack an opponent that's in an adjacent arena as well as the one you're in.

+2 BONUS WHEN  
YOUR TARGET IS IN

**Examples:** *long or shortbow, blowgun, sling, bola, crossbow, throwing spear*

### HEAVY WEAPONS 2 points of damage

Nice and big, so they do an extra point of damage if you manage to hit with them.

+2 BONUS WHEN  
USED IN

**Examples:** *bastard sword, warhammer, battleaxe, falchion, spiked ball-and-chain*

### VERY HEAVY WEAPONS 2 points of damage (sometimes 4)

Frickin' huge and powerful, requiring both hands (no shield). They also do an extra point of damage; beating an opponent's armor class by 5 or more does *two* extra points of damage.

**Examples:** *caber, spiked club, zweihander, double-headed axe*

### TIGHT ARENAS

Narrow places that often limit your mobility somehow.

### HAZARDOUS ARENAS

Places where footing is difficult or visibility is limited and requires care.

### OPEN ARENAS

Stark, wide-open areas where there is little to no cover.

### DENSE ARENAS

A crowded environment that has lots of fiddly but smashable bits that might get in the way.

### NEUTRAL ARENAS

A bland or ambiguous environment that's hard to define. No weapon type gets a bonus in a neutral arena.



# Armor & Healing

## THE 5 DIFFERENT ARMOR CLASSES (Any one of the first four can be chosen at first level)

no armor



**Examples:** barbarian loincloth, foppish clothes, a stylish hat, wizardly robes with stars and moons

light armor



**Examples:** regular or studded leathers, chain shirt, a bunch of buckles

heavy armor



**Examples:** breastplate over chainmail with a helmet, scale mail outfit, plates over leather

very heavy armor



**Examples:** seriously bitchin' set of full-plate, spikes optional

über armor



Very special or unusual armor class, generally can only be found on the rare bad guy or dangerously hard-to-kill monster. Generally not wearable by player characters.

### Fighting with No Armor

is totally awesome and a surviving character will thus automatically earn **2 Awesome Points**.

These armors optionally come with:

### Shields

Shields cannot be used in conjunction with *Ranged* or *Very Heavy* weapons.

Shields do not improve your **Armor Class**, but they can be used to soak damage:

A **Light Shield** can be immediately sacrificed to reduce one attack to a single point of damage.

A **Heavy Shield** will become *damaged* if used in such a manner, and getting hit again destroys it. *Damaged* shields can be repaired during down time.

## using up hit points

Any damage dealt to you that checks off your last hit box, you must roll to see if you are *Knocked Out* or *Bleeding Out*.

ROLL  
a d10



**If you rolled a 4 or higher**  
(zero counting as ten)

Fortunately you are only **Knocked Out**, and have to sit out the rest of combat recovering and gathering your strength again (unless someone manages to heal you somehow), at the end of which you get to pick yourself up and uncheck a box.

**If you rolled a 1, 2 or 3**

Uh-oh, your character is **Bleeding Out** and needs attention and some sort of immediate healing! Without that healing, at the end of combat your character will have to make a successful *Commitment* check of ten or better or die.

### Saving your Bacon

If a fellow party member in the same arena gives up their action the following round after you start *Bleeding Out*, they can patch you up and change your status to *Knocked Out*.

## healing after combat

### “WIND KNOCKED OUT” OR BETTER

Not really a beating, more like a strenuous workout. If you can arrange a scene in the game where you can rest for an hour or so, catch your breath, maybe get a bite to eat or drink, then you're back to full.

### “TAKEN A NASTY HIT” OR WORSE

You're feeling pretty messed up. You'll need at least a full day's bed rest to recover all your hit points.

Once you've recovered your hit points, you've acquired a **Scar**. Make sure to note where it is and how you got it on your character sheet.



# Combat Rules



## how to attack stuff

### Roll 2d10!

- Using a weapon in its preferred arena gives you +2
- Being a fighter gets you an extra +1
- Light weapons let you roll 3d10, drop lowest
- Some talents can also give you a bonus

## DAMAGE

A successful hit always does at least **one point of damage**. Use Awesome Points, Heavy Weapons or Talents to increase this, or luck out and hit them in the face (see below).

### ARMOR CLASS TO HIT

none	8
light	10
heavy	12
v. heavy	14
über	16

## FACE DICE!

One of the d10 you roll should be different from the other. This is your **Face Die**. Anytime you roll a ten (zero) on your face die when successfully hitting an opponent, *you hit them in the face*, which does an extra point of damage!

## initiative

**Initiative** is something that's only rolled once you reach an action phase where multiple opposing combatants have decided to act. Each character or group of bad guys rolls a single **d10** at the beginning of the action to determine the order.\*

Quick maneuvers like switching weapons, grabbing something, or using **Awesome Points** to recover damage are generally considered "free."

\*Note that the Elf gets a bonus to this roll.



A **Round** of combat is played in this order.

Each combatant gets to choose only **one** of these actions to perform each round. **NOTE:** Turn 7 cannot be chosen, as it's part of Turn 3.

defend  
- or -  
protect 1

Choosing either of these options means forgoing direct action in favor of taking a reactive stance which allows you to make a **Counter-attack** against everyone that successfully hits you in the attack turn of this round.

Choosing to **Defend** means that your **Armor Class** goes up by one category (+2).

Choosing to **Protect** means any attacks this round that target a chosen friend in your arena will attack you instead.

shoot 2

If you have a **Ranged Weapon**, you may make an attack against anyone in your arena *or* in an adjacent arena (this being the only non-talent way to attack someone not in your arena).

You can also choose to "hold and aim" and attack at any point later in the combat in order to interrupt someone's **focus** or decide who to attack once you see what they're doing.

focus  
- or -  
impede 3

If you decide to use a **Focus Talent** (like casting a spell), it's at this point you announce what you're starting to do and enter a period of vulnerability before the effects of the talent go off on **Turn Seven**.

Alternately you can attempt to **Impede** someone, spending your round preventing them from leaving the arena you're both in. To do so successfully requires testing your **Daring** against their **Cunning**. If you succeed, you may have also managed to **Corner** them (see **Turn Seven**).

move 4

Not just "moving around" (which anyone can usually do as they like within the arena they're in), this action allows you to **Move** your character into an adjacent arena, possibly even one you suggest to the DM on the spot.

require a successful **Attribute** test if the arena is difficult to get to (climbing onto a roof or jumping over a pit, for example), hopefully your DM will warn you of this beforehand.

However, moving to a new arena may

If someone managed to successfully **Impede** you, at this point you can attempt to **counter-attack** them if you wish.

attack 5

This action allows you to attack anybody you share the arena with.

Be sure to describe your attack in an exciting way, preferably with lots of hand gestures.

push  
- or -  
throw 6

You can attempt to move yourself and any number of opponents into an adjacent (and easily-accessible) arena by **Pushing** them, which requires testing a single **Cunning** roll against each of their **Commitment** rolls. If any of them win the test, none of you move.

Alternately you can attempt to **Throw** a single opponent into another arena by testing your **Brawn** versus either their **Awareness** or their **Commitment** (their choice).

focused  
events 7

At this point any **Focused** actions go off (initiative rolled if needed to determine order) but *only if* the focuser remained undamaged until now.

If you successfully **Impeded** someone, and also didn't take any damage since then, the **Impede** turns into a **Cornering** and they cannot choose the Move action the following round, either.

## rewarding awesomeness

The DM has a big old pile of Awesome Points. This is called **The Stack**.

In the middle of the table is a bowl of Awesome Points as well. This is called, for lack of a better term, **The Bowl**. A game session usually starts off with the DM putting about 2.5 x the number of players worth of points into the bowl, rounding up.

At any time—whether during character creation, someone saying something hilarious about the current events, a particularly slick move by a player character, whatever—when someone does something awesome, *anyone* can reach into the bowl and give that someone an **Awsome Point**.

Hopefully throughout the game lots of awesome stuff is happening and you should start running out of points in **The Bowl**. Sometimes the rules specifically say something you do deserves an **Awsome Point** (like surviving a fight without any armor, or making significant progress on an Adventuring Goal), and when that happens you should make a big deal of it and the DM should give you your **Awsome Points** directly out of **The Stack**.



Sometimes crappy things happen to the players.

Sometimes the DM pumps up the damage that the bad guys do to you, or heals them a bit after you've hit them particularly hard; sometimes the DM says things like, "*unfortunately, there are just too many guards and they manage to tie you up and throw you into jail,*" or reinforcements show up to help the guys you're fighting, or the DM decides that an evil villain manages to shrug off your spell and get away (the bastard), and when he or she does that the DM should just own up to what's going on and put a bunch more **Awsome Points** in **The Bowl** from **The Stack**.

### some ways you might end up spending your awesome points

Add a+2 to any Attribute Roll.  
Have something handy or nearby within reach.  
Add a cool effect to an Attack or Attribute Roll.  
Use a per-arena talent again in the same arena.

1 point

Do one more point of damage after a successful attack.  
Heal a single point of damage that you've just taken.  
Create an NPC you have a relationship with.  
Recharge a rested Talent outside of combat.

2 points

Use a Talent from your class that you don't have yet.

3 points

**Don't forget to check off an experience box on your class sheet!**

**NOTE:** Generally, spending Awesome Points doesn't constitute as some sort of action in and of itself, it just adds to an action you're doing.

## Leveling Up DING!

You level up when *everybody* at the table has spent (and checked off) twelve **Awsome Points** on their class sheets. Sometimes there's one or two people lagging behind the rest of you, and you should keep in mind that that's probably *your fault* for not rewarding them enough when they do something awesome, so see what you can do to help with that.

When that final **Awsome Point** is spent, try to get in a good cheer around the table and trade some high-fives but then go back to finishing your combat or the scene you're in or whatever's going on when it happens, because leveling up doesn't actually happen until your characters get a moment of peace and realize they have new abilities.

### TWO THINGS HAPPEN WHEN YOU LEVEL UP

#### improve an attribute

Choose one of your six Attributes and increase the written bonus by one.

#### pick a new talent

Select one new talent and add it to your character sheet.

And two other things you should do:

- ◆ Check off the new level number on your class sheet. This means you also have a new title!
- ◆ Re-evaluate your **Adventuring Goals** and your **Class & Concept**, and change them if needed.

**But wait!** The new talent that you pick doesn't have to be from your class – You can pick *any* talent from *any* of the classes that you like. However, doing so requires following two important rules:

{ You can *never* have more cross-class talents than you have class talents, }

– and –

{ If someone is playing the class you want a talent from, you *must* get their permission. }

### SOME CROSS-CLASS IDEAS

Fighter with some Cleric talents.

Fighter plus some Goblin and Dwarf.

Some amalgamation of Thief/Fighter/Elf talents.

Goblin “reskinned” with Thief and Dwarf talents.

Goblin meets Elf with a dash of Magic User.

Cleric plus Elf or vice versa.

paladin

barbarian

ranger

gnome

halfling

druid

# Going Adventuring

It takes a lot of courage and a little bit of foolhardiness to be an adventurer, and good adventuring is usually about treading that thin line between risking great danger for great reward and reknown, or getting in over your head and losing it all.

A lot of the time these sorts of situations will involve testing your character's various attributes against the challenge that you're hoping to resolve. It's up to the DM to explain the parameters of whatever situation you might find yourself in but it's usually up to you to decide how your character is going to face it.

## challenging your character

While your chosen class might primarily define *what you are* (or at least what you start off as), it's your attributes that define *what you can do*. Generally, directing your character's actions is as simple as explaining and describing what you are doing, whether in first person or third. Your DM will let you know if you succeed or fail, usually giving you a reason why; but to make it more dramatic, sometimes—lots of times—he (or she) might leave it up to chance and ask you to test one of your attributes to determine your success.

### testing an attribute

Determine with your DM which one of your character's six **Attributes** is most appropriate for the situation.

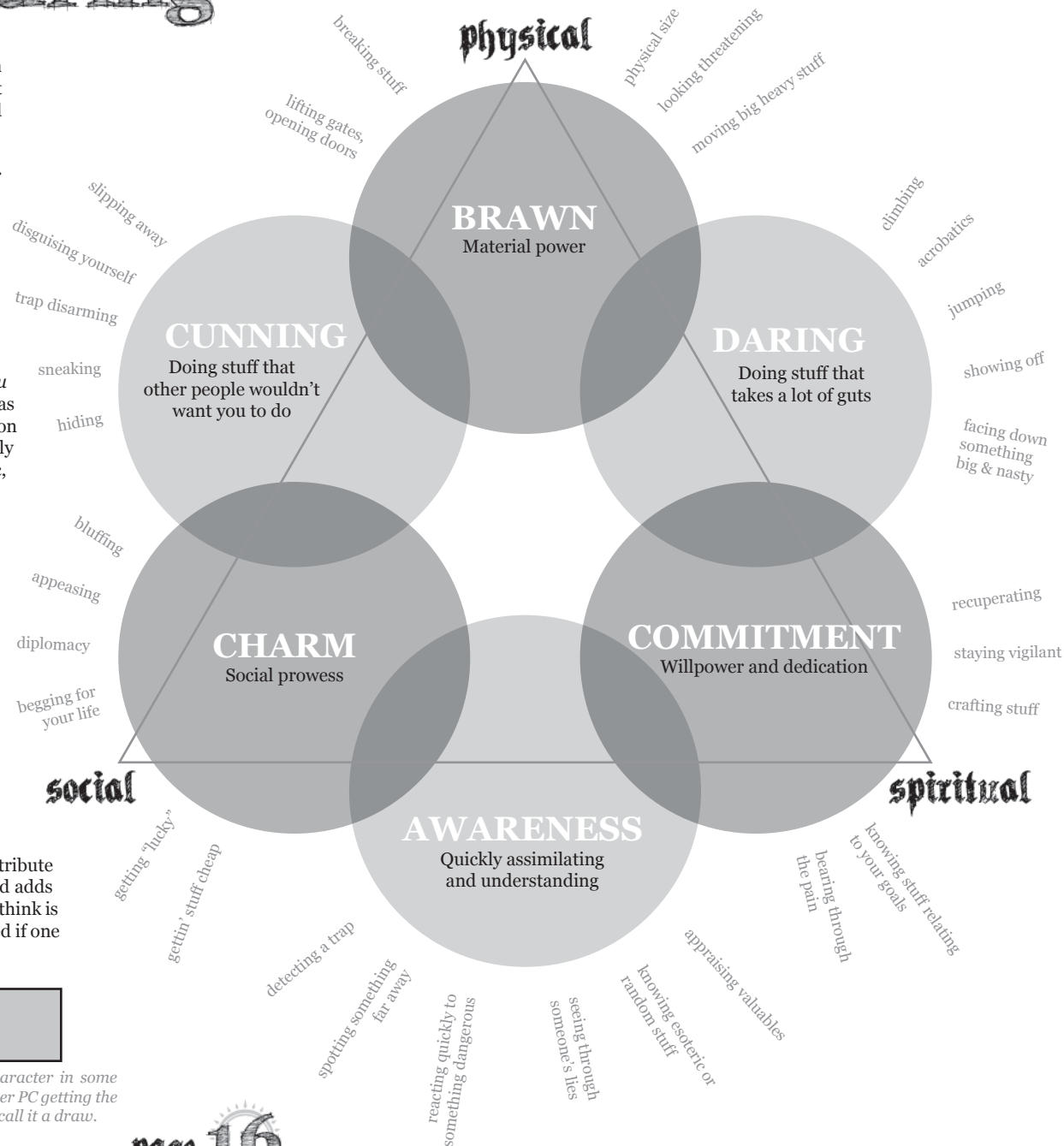
The DM then decides an **Attribute** you're rolling against, whether it's contested against another person or the work of another person. If they can't think of one, that's okay too.



Roll a **d12** and add (or subtract) your Attribute bonus to it. The DM also rolls a **d12** and adds (or subtracts) an **Attribute** bonus they think is the most suitable, or leaves it unmodified if one doesn't seem appropriate.

Meeting or exceeding the DM's roll\* counts as a success. Rolling below or rolling a 1 is always a failure.

\* If you are contesting another Player Character in some way then a tie is just that - a tie, with neither PC getting the upper hand. You can simply try again or call it a draw.





So far all this talk towards “you” has been more or less directed at the players. The next couple of pages are all about how to DM the game.

**Old School Hack** is built around the idea that interesting and dynamic combat encounters can be built quickly and easily on the fly, and modified as needed by the DM once they’re underway.

The key is first coming up with a varied-combat environment that’s made up of the various arena categories. I usually start off with a single “cool idea”:

- ▶ a thin bridge across a chasm,
- ▶ a floor filled with open pits,
- ▶ a ship racing across a desert,
- ▶ a dangerous mountain pass,
- ▶ anything else you find inspiring.

Then extrapolate from there how you would break it up and/or connect it to different arenas. An arena can be used to designate an area as large or as small as you like, it’s simply an abstract concept that means:

**“A place you might fight in that’s different from the places around it that you might fight in.”**

So rather than thinking in a traditional grid-based overhead view of your combat environment, Old School Hack combat maps can be anything: a hastily-filled out piece of paper with of labeled circles with connecting lines, a more elaborate overhead map delineating arena relationships, a spread-out collection of written-on post-its or index cards, or even a sketched-out side-view of a multi-leveled area; whatever works best for tracking who is where, what type of arena each area is, and which connects to which.

The tokens included in the appendix can make tracking who moves where a lot easier simply by being able to slide them around the different arenas.

## some example arenas

**Tight:** *Narrow corridors, stairs, balconies, back alleys, doorways, tunnels, closets, etc.*

**Hazardous:** *Crumbly rooftops, floors next to open pits, thin ledges or planks over precipices, spiky areas, murky swamps, foggy or smoky room with poor visibility, etc.*

**Open:** *The open sky (for flying), large chambers, big caverns, open water, courtyard or town square, an actual gladiatorial arena, etc.*

**Dense:** *The crowded shop, the thick forest, the thatch village, the store room or warehouse, the deck of a ship, the clockwork chamber, etc.*

**Neutral** *The can’t-figure-out-which-arena-this-is arena.*

Once you’ve got a rough map of two or more connected arenas laid out, decide where the players are and where their opponents are, as well as whether anyone is surprised (surprised combatants don’t get to act in the first combat round - this can be a big advantage so *Awareness* checks are important); and then begin asking the players what actions they want to do this round, while also deciding and hinting at what it looks like the bad guys are planning to do (not just describing it but usually by either laying out your own cards or placing their tokens on the tracker).

Once everyone’s more or less explained what they’re planning to do, begin going through the round in action order, directing the dice rolling and adjudicating what happens (you should encourage the players to describe their actions as well).

# Creating Encounters & Running Combat

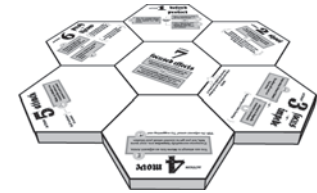
...AND OTHER HANDY  
INFO FOR THE DM

## cards vs. the combat tracker



Having a set of cards for each player and the DM can be nice because everyone has all their combat options outlined right there in their hand, and at the beginning of each round each player simply picks a card and displays it (the DM might pick multiple cards). The DM then goes through the round, following the displayed card turn order and adjudicating what happens.

**NOTE:** Regardless of which system you use, the players should always be able to choose their actions **after** the DM has described (and chosen) what actions the Bad Guys are planning to do.



The combat Hex Tracker is a little bit quicker and simply requires having an extra set of tokens for each PC and Monster/Bad Guy that’s involved in the combat.

At the beginning of each round, the DM and the players move the tracker tokens as needed so it’s clear who’s picking which action, and then the DM can go around the tracker and adjudicate each phase.

## adjudicating the round

Sometimes players will want to do something that doesn’t fall under one of the standard actions. Some guidelines:

### IS IT SOMETHING CLUNKY?

*make it a Focus action.*

### IS IT SOMETHING ATTACK-Y?

*make it an Attack action.*

### IS IT SOMETHING ELSE?

*Decide whether it’s worth really losing a whole round for, then either let the player add it to a regular action or simply choose when would be the most appropriate phase in the round.*

## unarmed combat

Someone wants to attack without a weapon?

Have them roll 2d10 as normal but only count the higher die. A player may spend one **Awesome Point** after rolling to add any Attribute bonus they want, provided they can explain how it helped hit, and then inflict a single point of damage.

If both opponents are unarmed, both get an additional +2 to their attacks, and neither can **Bleed Out** from the fight.



# Monsters & Powers

## MONSTERS AND BAD GUYS COME IN 4 FLAVORS

### minions - and - vermin

These are 1-hit-point guys that you should feel free to spill onto the combat scene in great numbers (up to double the number of players, give or take, is pretty safe).

Their undefined weapons (or claws) are crappy and never get an arena bonus (though they might be ranged), and they only get to roll **1d10** each to attack (not a face die), meaning they're almost always harmless one-on-one.

They do like to gang up, however. When you roll for two or more Minions attacking the same PC, *take the top 2 rolls* and add them together, discarding the rest. If it hits, the minions managed to do a point of damage, and if you're feeling nasty you can feed a couple of **Awesome Points** into the **Bowl** to make it two\*.

They usually have *Light Armor* or AC 10.

### guards - and - creatures

Tougher than Minions, Guards have two hit points, roll **2d10** (or **3d10** if using *Light*) to attack, and have one of the *Weapon Types* which will grant them an arena bonus. **Armor Class** can vary, but if they are

humanoid I often like to equip them with *Light Shields* just to make sure that they survive that first attack (see the *Shield* rules). I usually then flip the token over to help track who's wounded or not.

### bad guys, monsters - and - evil villains

These guys have 5 to 10 hit points or so and along with all the benefits of Guards or Creatures have access to various **Powers**, which can either be Talents from the class sheets, something from the sidebar, or something else you come up with, either beforehand or on the spot.

### freaky big monsters

These are the 15 hit point things (sometimes even more) with **Very Heavy** Weapon type attacks (and often multiple other types as well) that have access to multiple **Powers** and can often reach into Adjacent Arenas with impunity.

Save them for when your players are really stocked up on Awesome Points and short on humility.

### \* IN ANY COMBAT, YOU CAN FEED THE BOWL (usually about 2AP each) IN ORDER TO...

- ▶ "Pump" damage done in some gleefully descriptive way.
- ▶ Impose some sort of Condition or Effect with a successful attack (set on fire, temporarily blind, etc) that the player can roll to avoid (usually *Commitment*).
- ▶ Bring in Reinforcements (a la 2-AP cost of "creating an NPC relationship").
- ▶ Anything else that would be awesomely interesting and challenging.

The different monster types are left vague on purpose so they can be used fast and loose in **Old School Hack**, and in fact don't be afraid to "promote" a guard or minion mid-combat if it feels dramatically appropriate.

Deciding what to populate your encounter with should really be predicated mostly on your analysis of the current state of the **Awesome Point** economy.

Generally, if the players have not been awarding each other very many **Awesome Points**, throw a large mess of minions or vermin on the table which will give the players lots of opportunity to kick ass and be awesome. Once the bodies have begun to pile up around their feet, you can promote or bring in a tougher "boss" threat to help end the combat with a little excitement.

Conversely if a lot of points have been flying around and some of the players have even started hoarding a bit, go ahead and bring out the hard-hitting bigger guys right off the bat and let them really use those points to soak damage and recharge their talents.

What's important is that over the course of adventuring you continue to mix & match a diversity of foes to differentiate from previous encounters: say a handful of minions plus a few big toughs; or a single villain type, his bruiser, and his cadre of guards; or if you're feeling mean, that one big solo monster with the inflammatory halitosis.

With varied groups of monsters, be sure to take full advantage of the breadth of combat options: minions will often use the **Protect** action when their boss is trying to pull out a fancy **Focused** effect, for instance, and same-Arena opponents may choose to **Impede** the PCs if it looks like they're going to try to close with their ranged-attack allies in another arena, and so on.

If the combat starts to feel grindy, and you can't think of a way to spice it up, feel free to

have your bad guys surrender or turn and run. Not all combats should be to the death.

Last but not least, never ever miss the opportunity to turn an urban combat into a potential rooftop or market chase, because those are awesome.

## some possible powers

**Flying** creatures usually have access to the "Open Sky" arena and don't often have a problem moving from one Arena to another.

**Pulling**: a favorite of Giant Spiders and long-tongued Frog Demons, this is the ability to yank a PC from an adjacent Arena into their own and attack them. Alternately, **Siren**-like creatures like to open a combat by **Pulling** everybody into their arena with a Focus action.

**Poison** or **Energy Drain**: Really nasty Assassins or Undead favor attacks that force *Commitment* checks when they damage that have the potential to place negatives on all die rolls.

**Blast Effect**: This attack requires everyone in an Arena to make a *Cunning* or *Daring* check or take damage.

**Leech**: Rolling a 10 on any attack die allows this monster to regain a hit point.

Some Monsters and Magic-wielding Bad Guys have the power to **Change** the Arena type (often to "Hazardous") with a successful Focus action. Others may be able to **Create** a new Arena and force PCs into it by Awesome-Point pumping an attack, like, say, swallowing someone whole into their **Stomach** (tight).

Most of the Freaky Big Monsters are able to do an extra action if a specific action is successful, like being able to **Throw** or **Corner** an opponent with every successful Attack.

# Magic Items & Treasure

However much you wish to heed them, Magic Items in Old School Hack have the following rules:

Magic Items can only be found, stolen, or received as gifts; they *cannot* be purchased, unless it is from what certainly must be the strangest store ever - the finding of which should have been an adventure in and of itself.

Magic Items are rare and are usually inscribed with runes or decorations and have many rumors floating around about them. Therefore, every magic item must come with a **Story**.

Many such treasures will not even function unless the story is known. When the players find a Magic Item, either the DM or the players must come up with the story behind it, unless the DM wishes it to remain a mystery to be solved.

Magic Items essentially function as equipment that, when carried, worn or used, will give you access to Talent-like **Powers**, many of which involve some balance of positive and negative benefits. Unlike Talents, the **Powers** granted from Magic Items come in four different categories, and are not rechargeable through the use of **Awesome Points**.

## MAGIC ITEM CATEGORIES

### anytime

These powers are either constantly functioning or can be activated as needed anytime you want.

### use-once

Mostly the province of Potions and Scrolls, these Magic Items are consumed or broken once used.

### per-day

These Magic Items can only be activated once a day.

### charged

These wand-like items have a limited number of charges before they are used up or broken. Roll a **d10** everytime you use it. On a **one**, the item becomes mundane and non-magical. Sometimes there are rituals or other ways to "recharge" an expired Magic Item.

### THE EIGHT-FACETED EYE OF GRIMDOL (Anytime)

Anyone looking through this Jewel can see all sorts of unusual things (invisibility, things far away, the future of something, the past, whatever the DM decides is appropriate as well as a +2 to any Focused Awareness check). Large Spiders of all types feel ownership of this item and will attack anyone they see with it.

### HAT OF MINISCULE CONJURATION (Charged)

This odd-looking wizard's hat allows you to pull out any small innocuous item of limited value; or a small, furry and completely harmless creature; your choice of either. If a 10 is rolled on the Charge roll, the item is something quite dangerous instead, DM's choice.

### MOGNOL'S FLYING CARPET (Per-Day)

This curious bit of furnishing not only really ties the room together, but it can also levitate and transport sitting passengers through the air. Due to some irregularities in its creation, it can seat either one person or three, but not two.

### BESUVIUS'S TROUSERS OF COMFORT (Anytime)

These trousers are simply the most comfortable pants you will ever hope to wear, ever.

### HEALING DRAUGHT OF HEROIC PROWESS (Use-Once)

Not only does drinking this potion completely heal you up to full, but rolling a 3 or lower on a d10 when drinking it means you gain an extra hit point that lasts until you take damage, and you may erase one of your scars.

### RING OF TRUTHINESS (Anytime)

Anyone wearing this ring is obligated to tell the truth, no matter what.

### VERMICIOUS BRACERS OF COMBUSTION (Charged)

Tapping these bracers together causes a fiery explosion to erupt and propagate outward, causing 2 points of fiery damage to anyone else failing a *Cunning* check in the wearer's Arena and potentially setting things on fire.

### GRYMTONGUE (Anytime)

This +1 Very Heavy Weapon does not encumber and can be sheathed in flames at the bearer's command. It does an extra point of damage against Lizardkin and Dragons if the wielder shouts "snicker-snack!".

### URTRAN'S UNRELIABLE ROPE (Anytime)

This magical rope can be used as a reach weapon that automatically **Corners** an opponent with a successful attack (but causes no damage). However, whether used in combat or not, the rope will invariably untie itself in 1d10 rounds.

### FILANDRIBUTH'S STAFF OF DISHEVELMENT (Per-Day)

Tapping this +1 Reach Weapon on the ground causes weapon belts (and occasionally undergarments) of people in the same Arena to loosen and drop. Sadly, the staff has no way of telling friend from foe.

### THISTLEVINE SEED (Use-Once)

These dangerously treated seeds will sprout annoying, thorny thistles in any Arena they are thrown into, making it Hazardous.

### BELT OF DWARVENKIND (Anytime)

While wearing this belt, the wearer is forced to be nice to dwarves. Whether they're nice back is up to them.

### RING OF EVASION (Anytime)

This ring constantly evades any attempts at wearing it. If one manages to successfully put it on, the wearer gets a +2 bonus to all *Cunning* checks to avoid someone **Impeding** them.

### FIDDLE OF FANATICAL DANCING (Charged)

Whenever this instrument is played, anyone in the same Arena must make a *Commitment* check or begin dancing uncontrollably. They can still fight (at a -2 disadvantage), they just look extremely foolish doing so.

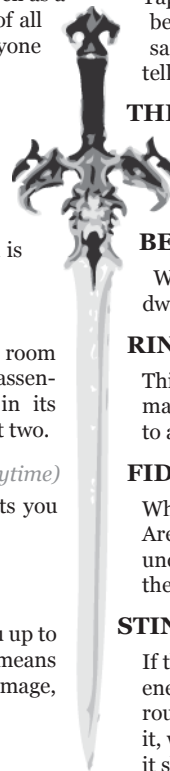
### STINKLEDINK'S RAVENOUS COOKBOOK (Anytime)

If this +1 Ranged Weapon is successfully thrown at an enemy, it will continue to bite them through following rounds unless a successful *Daring* check is made to get rid of it, whereupon it returns to the wielder. Any creature killed by it shows up as an ingredient in a new recipe.

## magic weapons

Magic Weapons that are listed as having a plus bonus do not in fact give you a permanent bonus to attack and damage rolls.

When using a "plus something" Magic Weapon, you can spend up to that bonus in **Awesome Points** to add to your hit roll on any given attack, and adding to the damage only costs one Awesome Point, not two.



# FAQ & Final Comments

Many of the answers to the Frequently Asked Questions compiled by Liam (a.k.a. nerfherder) I've reintegrated back into this Rules document, but there's a number of things I'd like to address specifically:

## awesome points

**If you spend Awesome Points to do something awesome, can you then get Awesome Points for it?**

The rules are explicit. Whenever anyone does something you think is awesome, you should give them an Awesome Point for it. No exceptions.

**Can you affect a roll with Awesome Points more than once?**

I discourage it, but not to the point of saying so explicitly.

**Can you spend Awesome Points on another player's character?**

Doing so makes it unclear who's actually spending it and thus who would get the Advancement check, so I would say no. Instead, people should encourage (and suggest ways) to do something as awesomely as possible (even if to fail), and be ready to reward.

## combat and monsters

**I've had a couple times where the monsters were in one arena, and the players were in another, and everyone readied Move actions. They wound up switching arenas. Can whoever loses the initiative (and thus moves second) opt to abandon their action?**

I think that's fine, though hopefully the DM remembers to broadcast the monster's intention to charge.

If you're feeling samurai-ish, let both parties get an attack as they move past each other, and make sure to make a

## making checks

**When making an unopposed Attribute Check, does the DM roll a d12 or come up with a static number?**

I've come to really appreciate the degree of randomness in leaving the difficulty of a situation (or a magical effect) "up to the dice" so to speak, though I will bend it with a modifier if I want to affect the result one way or the other.

That being said there's nothing wrong with setting target numbers if that's how you want to do it.

**I heard that at one point there was a Mulligan rule for when you rolled super-crappy Attributes.**

That's between you and your DM. I will usually let someone reroll if their negatives outweigh their positives. That being said, I've been known to give Awesome Points right off the bat for willingness to play a disadvantaged character (and working off of that).

I like to remind people that Attributes affect your combat prowess only very indirectly.

"PA-CHREEEEEEENG!" sound effect as they do.

**What do you do if one of your players narrates a seemingly impossible to reach (except by them) Arena?**

Sometimes my bad guys "just happen" to have Ranged Weapons. Sometimes they call in aerial reinforcements. Sometimes they are clever and come up with a way to change to situation (start a cave-in, summon a storm, chop supports, etc.)

Sometimes the players are clever and deserve a safe zone.

## other stuff

**Has there been any discussion regarding mundane items/services? Every class starts with some coinage so, where and what do they spend it on?**

I haven't worried about shopping lists too much because the currency system maps just fine to most other Fantasy Gaming Item Cost Charts.

But my friend Luke (Nareau) came up with a wonderfully loose price list which I'll include some of here, full credit going to him.

**1gp**

*Cheap Adventuring Stuff: rope, 10' pole, fishing gear, torches, rations, staves, slings, a meal, an ale, a night at the tavern.*

**5gp**

*Basic Stuff: thieves tools, lanterns, tents, carts, donkeys, swords, axes, a night at the brothel, a night of drinking.*

**25gp**

*Cool Stuff: horses, most light armor, elven wine, holy water, spyglass, bribing a crooked guard.*

**100gp**

*Expensive: warhorses, most heavy armor, an exotic animal, a carriage.*

## on awesomeness

The nature of the Awesome Point feedback mechanic can certainly drive the tenor of an **Old School Hack** game towards over-the-top and sometimes even a silly sort of playstyle. This can be fun. This can also sometimes not really be the kind of game that people were hoping to play.

**Old School Hack** is very much a game that I built in order to satisfy a personal need for off-the-cuff and unprepared gamemastering that still fits firmly-satisfyingly-into the classic fantasy gaming genre - so much so that it is easiest to run it with an embracing attitude of those very cliches. The fact that OSH games have tended to end up a little on the "let's not take this seriously" side really was a natural side-effect of this goal, not necessarily the originator of it.

It's up to every group to find their own particular recipe of fun, and I think there's a reasonably wide range of light-heartedness that can be achieved with this system. My only advice is that if seriousness is a concern, address it beforehand and hopefully gameplay will be tempered to meet everyone's expectations.

## on dungeoncrawling

I would also caution DMs excited about running **Old School Hack** to note that the system does not really work as a tunnel-by-tunnel mapping/exploration game, and dungeon delving is best done in terms of describing and roleplaying the exploration one degree of abstraction up, so to speak. That being said, I've had some wonderfully exciting dungeoncrawling sessions with OSH, though largely by glossing over the nitty-gritty details and decision-making and getting right to some big exciting multi-environmental encounter.

**THANKS FOR PLAYING!**

Please visit the forums and tell us about your Old School Hack games!  
[forums.oldschoolhack.net](http://forums.oldschoolhack.net)





## ACTION

1

defend  
- or -  
protect

You can counter-attack every successful attack made against you this round.

also you either



Get a +2 bonus to your AC for this round.

- or -



Pick a friend in your arena, all attacks targeting him attack you instead.

## ACTION

2

shoot



Use a **Ranged Weapon** to make an attack on someone in this arena or one adjacent.

**OPTION:** You can "hold and aim" your attack until later in the round, so as to interrupt someone's **focus** or to just wait for the right moment.

## ACTION

3

focus  
- or -  
impede

Begin using a **Focus Talent**.



- or -

Attempt to **Impede** someone's movement.



Your **Daring** vs. their **Cunning**

if you reach  
Turn 7 undamaged

Your Focused Effect goes off.



- or -

## ACTION

7

Your target is **Cornered** and cannot move next round.

effect

## ACTION

4

move



You can attempt to **Move** into an adjacent Arena. Sometimes this requires an **Attribute** test.

If someone successfully **Impeded** you, your move fails, but you get to counter-attack your blocker.



**TIP:** No adjacent arena? Try suggesting one!

## ACTION

5

attack  
(non-ranged)

{ Roll Initiative if needed. }



Make an **Attack** or an attack-like action on anyone in your arena!

## ACTION

6

push  
- or -  
throw

Attempt to **Push** one or more opponents into another Arena with you.

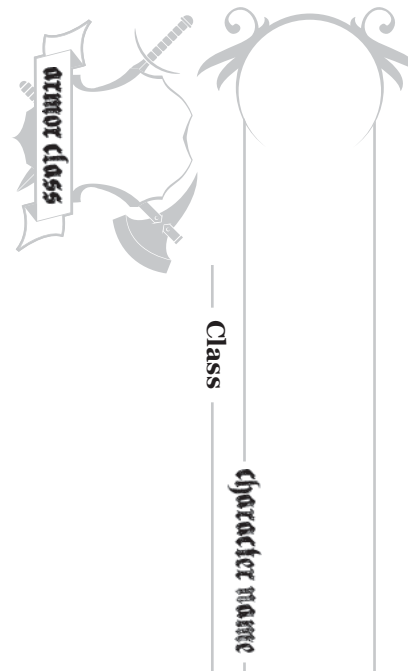
Your **Cunning** vs. their **Commitment**, if any beat you, everyone stays put.

or



Attempt to **Throw** a single opponent into another Arena.

Your **Brawn** vs. their **Awareness** or **Commitment**, their choice of which.



spend your awesome points! \* And don't forget to check off an Experience Box

1 point

Add a +2 to any Attribute Roll  
Have something Handy or nearby in reach  
Add a cool effect to an Attack or Attribute Roll  
Use a per-arena Talent again in the same arena

2 points

Do 1 more point of damage after a successful attack  
Heal a single point of damage that you've just taken  
Create an NPC you have a relationship with  
Recharge a rested Talent outside of combat

3 points

Use a Talent from your class that you don't have yet



**SUPER COOL  
CARD DISPLAYER**  
(this side underneath)

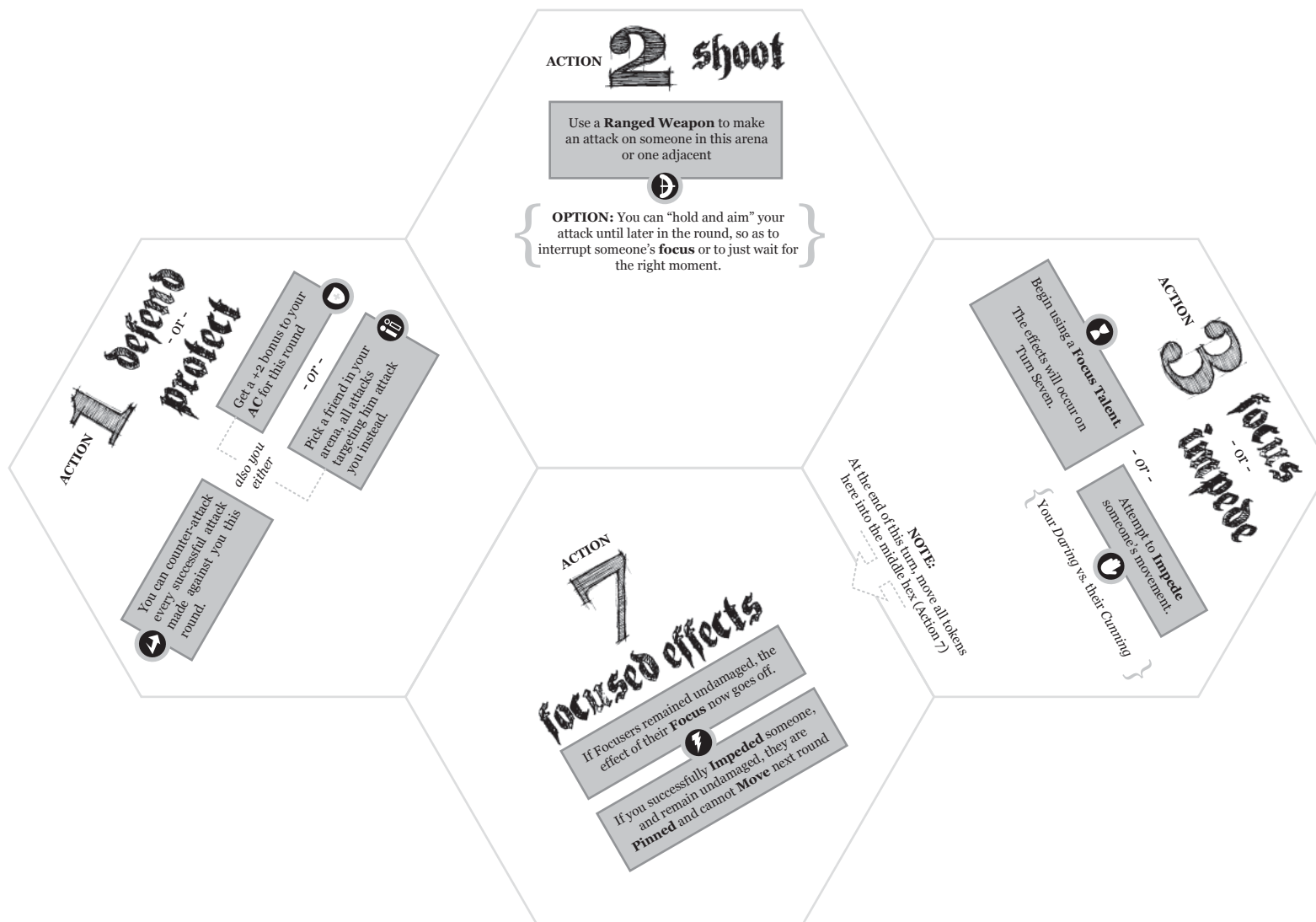


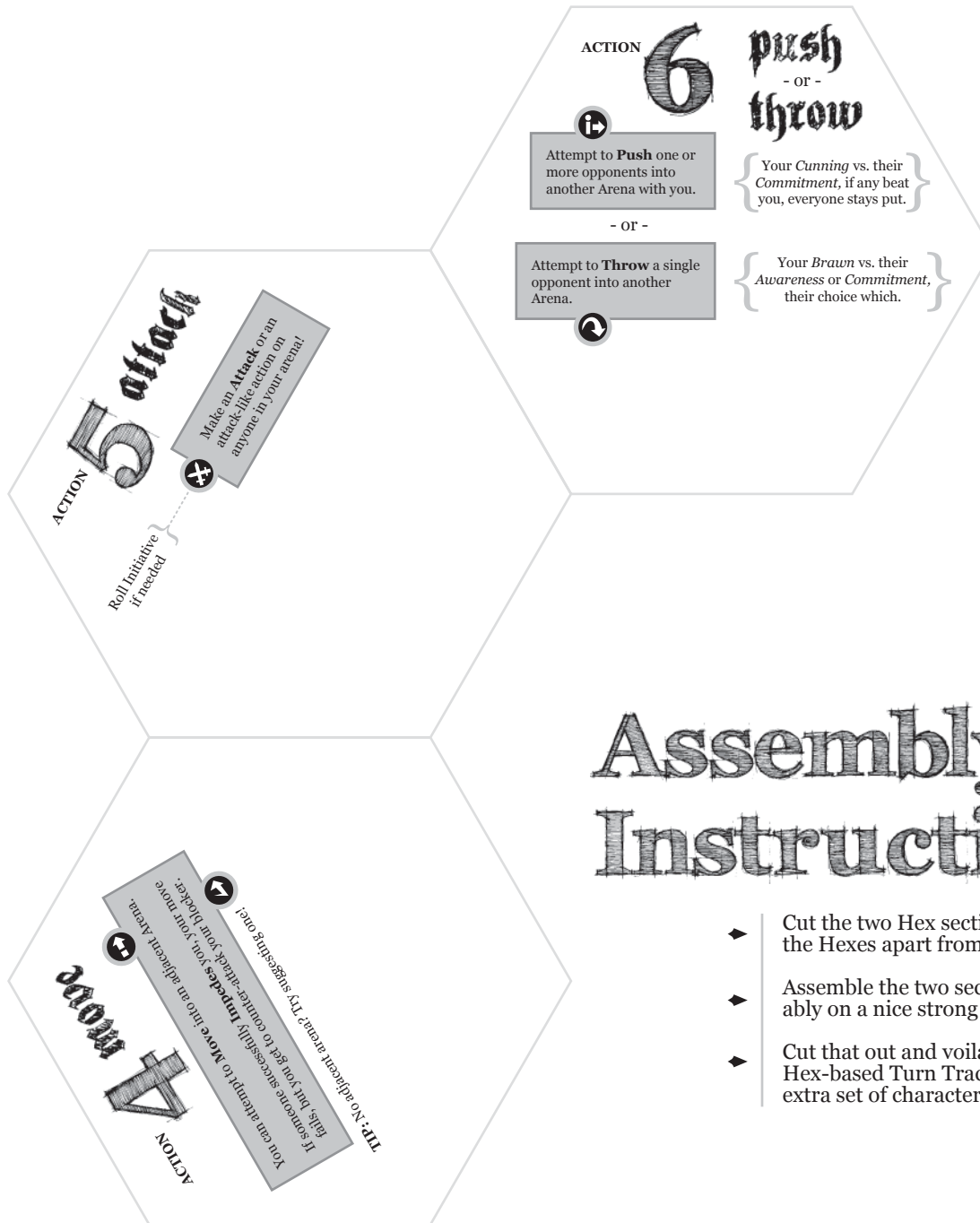
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- ◆ Cut the two Hex sections out without cutting the Hexes apart from each other.
- ◆ Assemble the two sections together, preferably on a nice strong cardstock or foamcore.
- ◆ Cut that out and voila, a Rel-Patented Hex-based Turn Tracker™ to be used with an extra set of character and bad guy tokens!

